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SUBJECT: WESTERN HEMISPHERE: VENEZUELA, CLOSING OF RCTV, CHAVEZ'S REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE; SAO PAULO

¶1. "Geopolitical Presages"

Editorialist Aldo Pereira remarked in liberal, largest national circulation daily Folha de S. Paulo (6/4): "Hugo Chvez bought USD 4.5 billion in weapons over the past two years.... He has justified such spending as a precaution against a possible 'asymmetrical' war against the U.S. The U.S. power may be unable to combat insurgencies (Vietnam, Iraq, Lebanon, Somalia), but it is lethal in conventional war.... A coordinated U.S. action would pulverize the conventional equipment and installations of Venezuela in hours. Therefore, the naval and aerial military apparatus that Chvez is mounting is aimed at rivals of another category, like Colombia, for example. The Venezuelan military program is creating in South American geopolitics a troublesome, volatile, contradictory and enigmatic landscape marked by an already initiated arms race.... Chvez and Morales have reached power through constitutional means. But so did Hitler. History advises watching carefully the mutual fascination of charismatic leaders and their nations. 'Bolivarian' fantasies can lead to caudillo-type totalitarianism and interventionism in the Havana-Caracas-La Paz axis.... Budgetary limitations have forced the Brazilian Army to recruit fewer soldiers. There are no resources for arms, ammunition and training. How then can we guard the extensive borders with Venezuela, Bolivia and other South American nations? Or protect interests such as those of the 400,000 Brazilians living in the Bolivian region where Chvez has promised to build military bases? 'If you wish peace, prepare yourself for war,' Roman strategist Flavius Vegetius Renatus wrote in the 4th Century."

¶2. "Nothing Stops Hugo Chvez"

Influential, national circulation daily O Estado de S. Paulo (6/2) editorialized: "Nothing seems to diminish Colonel Hugo Chvez's furor in his course towards the installation of a declared dictatorship in Venezuela.... Chvez is manipulating the demonstrations against restrictions to freedom of expression in his favor.... But Chvez's rapid march towards an open dictatorship is beginning to frighten Venezuelans. Public opinion sectors opposing him and his methods, which were silent and tired after two years of strikes and street demonstrations, have resumed their activity.... University students are leading the protests.... Actions against freedom of expression have also mobilized artists and intellectuals who had watched the implantation of the '21st Century socialism' from a comfortable distance.... Now, even pro-Chvez congressmen have protested against the attempts against freedom of expression.... Venezuela is a signatory of the OAS Inter American Democratic Charter and is also subject to the conditions of Mercosur's Democratic Clause. This makes attacks against democracy in Venezuela a problem for all hemispheric nations. Therefore, the

nations of the region may act with all legitimacy to diplomatically dissuade Colonel Hugo Chvez from completing his totalitarian project, and, if they do not succeed, to isolate his regime from the hemispheric community."

McMullen